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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 EB-08 COME-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8391
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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 11581

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PGOV PINT EG
SUBJECT: MINCULTURE AL-SAWI SUES OPPOSITION PRESS FOR
- LIBEL

SUMMARY: MINISTER CULTURE AND INFORMATION AL-SAWI SUEING OPPOSITION PRESS FOR ALLEGATIONS THAT HIS 24-YEAR-OLD SON GOT CONTRACT FOR SAUDI FIRM WITH FATHER'S MINISTRY DUE TO NEPOTISM. SPEAKING TO PEOPLES ASSEMBLY AL-SAWI ACCUSED USSR, REJECTIONISTS AND COMMUNISTS OF WAGING CAMPAIGN AGAINST HIM TO DESTROY OPEN DOOR POLICY. AL-SAWI INSISTED HE IS NOT A CROOK. ALLEGED SCANDEL IS PARTICULARLY EMBARRASSING TO GOVERNMENT SINCE AL-SAWI IS CLOSELY CONNECTED TO PRESIDENTIAL CONFIDANT OSMAN AHMED OSMAN. END SUMMARY.

1. APRIL 25 DAILIES REPORTED MINISTER OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION ABDEL MONEIM AL-SAWI HAS BROUGHT LIBEL CHARGES AGAINST EDITORS OF RIGHT WING AL-AHRAR AND LEFTIST AL-AHALI (LATTER IS LEFTIST PARTY LEADER KHALID MOHIE EL DIN). AL-SAWI SUEING EDITORS FOR ARTICLES CONDEMNING AGREEMENT SIGNED BY HIS MINISTRY WITH SAUDI FIRM TO
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RESUSCITATE EGYPT'S FILM INDUSTRY. AL-SAWI'S 24-YEAR-OLD SON IS PRINCIPAL IN SAUDI FIRM. SPEAKING BEFORE PEOPLES ASSEMBLY, AL-SAWI CHALLENGED ANYONE TO PROVE THAT HE RECOMMENDED, INTERVENED OR HELPED HIS SON DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS.

2. WHO'S RESPONSIBLE? AL-SAWI ACCUSED SOVIET UNION,

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ARAB REJECTIONISTS AND LOCAL COMMUNISTS OF WAGING CAMPAIGN AGAINST HIM TO INTIMIDATE EGYPTIAN MINISTERS. GOAL, HE CLAIMED, IS TO "ENCIRCLE EGYPT'S POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL EFFORTS." REAL TARGET, SAID AL-SAWI, IS SADAT'S OPEN DOOR POLICY. HE CONCLUDED CAMPAIGN LED BY PRODUCERS AND ACTORS WANTING TO MONOPOLIZE EGYPTIAN FILM PRODUCTION.

3. I AM NOT A CROOK. WAXING EMOTIONAL, AL-SAWI DECLARED "I AM A MAN WHO OWNS NOTHING BUT WHAT HE EARNED BY THE LABOR OF HIS HANDS AND THE SWEAT OF HIS BROW. I IN-HERITED NOTHING FROM MY FATHER BUT VIRTUE AND HONESTY. HE ADDED, "LET THE OPPOSITION ORGANS BEAT THEIR HEADS AGAINST THE WALL." THE PEOPLES ASSEMBLY SUPPORTED AL-SAWI, ALBIET WITH THE PROVISO THAT THE AGREEMENT IN QUESTION DOES NOT CONSTITUTE CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATION NOR WILL IT ESTABLISH MONOPOLY. FURTHER, PEOPLES ASSEMBLY STIPULATED THAT MINISTRY OF CULTURE WILL NOT BE CO-PARTNER NOR WILL EXISTING EGYPTIAN PRODUCERS BE CUT OUT OF ACTION.

4. COMMENT: BUSINESS ACUMEN OF AL-SAWI'S YOUNG SON IN LANDING MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR AGREEMENT HAD BEEN GRIST FOR CAIRO'S RUMOR MILL DURING PAST FEW WEEKS, WITH VIRTUALLY ALL EMBASSY CONTACTS ATTRIBUTING SUCCESS TO HIS FAMILIAL CONNECTIONS. ONLY SUPPORT WE CONFIDENTIAL

HAVE HEARD IN PRIVATE WAS FROM AL-SAWI'S DIRECTOR EGYPTIAN INFORMATION SERVICE MOURSI SAAD EL DIN, WHO CLAIMED YOUNG MAN IS CHILD OF AL-SAWI'S FIRST MARRIAGE AND WITH WHOM MINISTER HAS HAD ONLY INFREQUENT CONTACT OVER YEARS. EVEN MOURSI, HOWEVER, ADMITTED IT DIDN'T LOOK GOOD. ALLEGED SCANDAL IS PARTICULARLY EMBARRASSING TO GOE SINCE AL-SAWI IS CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH OSMAN AHMED OSMAN, AND THROUGH HIM TO SADAT. OSMAN, TOO, IS LONG REPUTED TO HAVE ENRICHED HIMSELF AT PUBLIC TROUGH. AL-SAWI'S SUIT COULD PROVE TO BE MORE OF AN EMBARRASSMENT THAN EXONERATION. FACTS IN CASE ARE NOT IN DISPUTE: MINISTRY APPARENTLY DID SIGN HIGHLY REMUNERATIVE CONTRACT WITH COMPANY REPRESENTED BY MINISTER'S SON WHO HAS LITTLE TO RECOMMEND HIM IN SUCH NEGOTIATIONS OTHER THAN HIS FATHER'S NAME. EILTS

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TAGS: PGOV, PINT, SOPN, EG, (AL-SAWI, ABD AL-MUN\'IM MAHMUD)
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